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Mississippi? In our opinion, the interests of these States, and of the emigrants themselves, would be most effectually promoted by raising the price of the public lands to a point which would really keep them out of the market for twenty years to come.

- ART. VII.—*History of the later Roman Commonwealth, from the End of the Second Punic War to the Death of Julius Cæsar; and of the Reign of Augustus; with a Life of Trajan.* By THOMAS ARNOLD, D. D., late Regius Professor of Modern History in the University of Oxford, and Head-Master of Rugby School. New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1846. 8vo. pp. 552.
2. *A History of the Romans under the Empire.* By CHARLES MERIVALE, B. D., late Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge. London: Longmans. 1850. 2 vols. 8vo.

It is a hackneyed saying, that the ages which furnish the least of history write the most. Nor is it unnatural that this should be the case. An uneventful present, neither offering grounds of interest in itself, nor affording materials for a clear horoscope of the future, can hardly fail to lay a fond and strong hold upon the past. Then, also, eloquence, poetry, and the more fervid forms of literature are inspired and nourished by tumult, war, and revolution; but, when the general mind relapses into quietness, they yield place for the graver muse of history. Still farther, as the most insignificant men are the most ready to boast of their ancestry, and as the stripling who has the least in himself is the most prone to "ape his sire," so does the age which wins little glory of its own, search with the most loving diligence for the title-deeds of its hereditary fame, and trace out with the most reverent regard the footsteps of vanished generations.

But such theorizing seems rebutted by the phenomena of our own times. We certainly have been making history with unprecedented rapidity. The striking events of the last fifty years incomparably outnumber and outweigh those of the

three preceding centuries. The whole realm of art, science, government, and social economy has been in a transition state; and transactions which one month fill the world with amazement are almost forgotten in the crowded budget of the next month. Nor was there ever a generation which made so little use of the past as ours. The perpetually recurring phrase "of the day" is almost necessary to commend opinions, theories, institutions, and reforms to serious regard; and we have even heard and read of "the Gospel of the day," as if that which has nurtured the piety of eighteen hundred years had become effete, and needed revision and readaptation. At the period of the first French Revolution, the precedents of antiquity were not neglected, though they were wretchedly misused. A great deal was said and written about the ancient republics, which furnished names and insulated paradigms for many of the innovations discussed, projected, and established by the successive ranks of destructives and reconstructives. But Red Republicanism has no past; Socialism has no hold on historical epochs; Chartism is autochthonous, and can claim no ancestral tree. The newborn and still nascent constitutions of Europe, though they bear little kindred to Minerva, resemble her in the hot haste of their motherless birth. In fine, in its political, philosophical, ethical, and, to a lamentable degree, in some of its religious aspects, the age tends to self-isolation, and, in ignoring the past, is preparing to be itself ignored by a more loyal future.

By theory, then, affluence in historical writing ought not to be prominent among the literary features of our times. Yet it is prominent. Every department of historical and antiquarian research is pursued with a zeal unknown before. The dust of centuries has been brushed alike from public archives and from public records. Old authorities are collated and sifted, and the test of a skeptical criticism is applied to what have hitherto been undisputed traditions. Myths are reduced to their initial formulæ of fact, while infinitesimal fragments of fact are integrated into their long-lost values. Even dates and trivial details find vehement partisans for their various renderings; and ancient battle-grounds and military routes are traced and measured with a fonder curiosity than attaches itself to Marengo or Waterloo. No man's literary reputa-

tion seems complete till he has written a history ; and our own pages have more than once given expression to the vague surmise and half-formed hope, that certain distinguished Americans, who have been second to none in elevating the intellectual standard of their country, are accumulating materials for master-works in this department, to fill up all that is lacking to their enviable fame. It is chiefly on this field that the rivalry of genius between England and America is now contested. Sparks, Prescott, Bancroft, Ticknor, are our foremost names, when we challenge transatlantic comparisons ; while voluminous and elaborate histories are chasing one another through the British press, faster than their merits can be canvassed, or their relative rank assigned.

The people, too, indisposed as they are to profit by the past, preyed upon, as they are, by all manner of unfathered absurdities, all read history. Macaulay's *England* has passed through almost as many editions as the *Waverley Novels* ; and on books of no other class can a publisher afford so large an outlay, or depend upon so rapid a sale. While we are writing, there is laid upon our table the first volume of a cheap, popular edition of Grote's *Greece*, — a work, which, twenty years ago, would have found its way only into the libraries of professed scholars. Meanwhile, every town and parish, every institution or society that has a past, can find its hundreds of purchasers and readers for its full-sized duodecimo of obscure names, insignificant events, and barren gossip ; while even a periodical devoted to genealogies, without the lubricating admixture of "old wives' fables," finds subscribers enough to maintain its place and make its fair show among our more expensive *Quarterlies*.

Here we have a problem well worth our investigation. Among the causes of the fertility of our times in historical literature, a prominent place is, no doubt, to be assigned to the dearth of materials for imaginative writing. Fact, which used to limp far in the rear, has now overtaken and outspeeded fancy. Poetry and fiction have been almost ostracized by the earth-genius of discovery and invention. Most of our verse is but metrical prose, and novels must be either grotesque or immoral to atone for the lack of originality. There is, indeed, a legion of rhymers, and of novelists in a small or a coarse way ; but we could almost count on our

fingers those who, in either department, feel the afflatus of genuine inspiration, or can find unoccupied earth-room or sky-room, or unappropriated materials, for their creations. Meanwhile, the age is too mechanical and skeptical to abound in master-works of abstract reasoning, or of spiritual contemplation. A Fenelon or an Edwards would seem hardly less a *lusus naturæ* than a centaur or a mermaid. The affairs of the present are also exempted from the cognizance of men of the highest culture and ability, by the industry, ingenuity, and copiousness with which they are discussed in the daily press. Therefore, many men of genius and scholarship, who will and must write, are driven to history as the only form of intellectual effort open at once to original research and to the full appreciation of the public.

"Open to original research," we say; for almost all history has needed to be rewritten, and most of the great historical works of preceding generations are already obsolete or obsolescent. Geography, the basis of history, has in our own day first taken its place among the exact sciences. Buried capitals have been discovered and disinterred; the localities of defunct empires are determined with the minutest precision; and this knowledge alone has corrected a multitude of errors in fact, and has given definiteness and coherency to narratives which before were understood vaguely, or not at all. Oriental and classic archæology, also, in the affluence of its materials and the exactness of the results, seems like the growth of yesterday, so meagre and unsatisfying do previous researches appear when compared with the most recent. Then, too, historical criticism can hardly be deemed to have had its birth prior to Niebuhr's labors on Roman history. The old method was to place equal reliance on whatever authorities bore the seal of venerable antiquity, even though they might treat of times long antecedent to their own, and generally to shun the task of reconciling discrepancies by consulting as few original authorities as possible. Legend was incorporated freely with undoubted fact, and the nearest event compatible with the laws of nature was assumed as the actual basis for every supernatural tradition. Mythologies were unsparingly blended; and the strongly marked distinction between the Greek and Roman pantheon was scarcely recognized or imagined. Much less were the various renderings

of mythical traditions placed side by side, and traced back to their respective sources, so as to receive light from, or to cast light upon, the primeval history of the states of Greece or the Italian colonies. Similar remarks apply to the mediæval ages, which can hardly be said to have been the subject of scholarly investigation by any writer previous to Hallam. Thus, the vast accumulation of various kinds of subsidiary knowledge by travellers, antiquaries, philologists, and critics has made history a *tabula rasa*, and left in the world's literature a chasm which it remained for this generation to fill.

Different ages, also, make widely different demands of history. When war was the great interest of governments and nations, (and this seems to have been the case until the fall of Napoleon,) the chief thing required of the historian was, that he should be a chronicler of battles, sieges, insurrections, and revolutions ; and it is amazing how pacific intervals of development and progress were hurried through, with hardly a mention of the discoveries and inventions which recreated science, transfigured art, stimulated industry, and renewed the face of society. In general, in the earlier histories, events, and not men, — external and international movements, and not the internal condition and changes of society, occupied the foreground. There was little analysis of motive, principle, or character. The actors on the arena were treated like the pieces on a chess-board, — important, not in their own configuration or specific differences, but only in their bearing on the results of the game. But little account was made of man as man. The diffusion of the republican element throughout Christendom has created a different mode of viewing the past, and consequently a new demand from its records. What is now sought is not the number of men killed in a battle, the order of attack or the munitions for defence, but the purposes, passions, and experiences of leaders and armies, kings and nations. The homes of the people, their social condition, their culture, their superstitions, their laws of domestic life, are now objects of eager inquiry. The Helot, the plebeian, the slave, must have his place in the narrative ; and intense curiosity hangs around the memorials of such classes of men as used to be counted by the score or the hundred, computed in mass, and unrecognized in their individual capacity and worth. We will venture the asser-

tion, that Macaulay's chapter on the social condition of England in 1685, has contributed more than all the residue of the two published volumes of his history to their marvellous and universal popularity ; yet it is a chapter, which, had he written it twenty years ago, would have been curtailed into a brief appendix, or broken up into obscure foot-notes.

In fine, it is the biographical element that is now chiefly demanded in history. This craving accounts for the success, in a proportion but slightly dependent upon their merit, of so many voluminous memoirs of public men. The title, "Life and Times," is enough to set afloat pairs and triplets of huge octavos, laden far below the sinking point with vile gossip, unmeaning correspondence, and "papers of no value to any one but the owner." Even if a man's mind has been a blank or a bog, and his heart arid as Sahara, thousands of readers can be found to drag through the *post mortem* examination, barely for the luxury of having a real subject dissected in their sight.

Now, to meet this demand, history must assume one of two shapes. It must either treat biographically the complex personality of a nation, depicting its sentiments, aims, growth, conflicts, and decline, as those of a single multiform soul and manifold life ; or it must resolve itself into a series of individual biographies, with a connecting thread of narrative. The former process demands more genius, and wins the highest applause ; but often it sacrifices fact to fancy, abnormal details to the primal conception, and the actual march of events to the reconstructive theory on which they are arranged. The latter requires the more patient research and the larger converseance with existing varieties of character, and is most likely to convey historical truth, inasmuch as nations never move as units, but by the combined action of mutually modifying and counteracting forces.

The two works named at the head of this article furnish respectively striking specimens of these two types of historical composition. Arnold was not, we suppose, a man of profound original research. Indeed, his life was too busy for him to obtain at first-hand a tithe of the materials, which he knew how to elaborate with so much skill and grace. In the earlier Roman history, he was a close follower of Niebuhr ; in the later commonwealth, there was less room for skepti-

cism or for peculiar theories of interpretation, the discrepancies as to matters of fact being few and trivial. But what distinguishes him as a writer of history is, the compactness and unity which he imparts to the march of events, so that he always permits us to trace the condition and fortunes of the nation as an undivided whole, presents the resultant force without the minute analysis of its elements, and describes individual actors less in their individual capacity, than as the representatives of national characteristics and tendencies. His sketches even of the most illustrious men, the Gracchi, Julius Cæsar, Augustus, and Trajan, are therefore vague, meagre, and unsatisfying ; while his conception of the Roman mind and character, in its initial type, its development and its world-wide influence, is distinct, coherent, and adequate. In his enlarged view of the Providential education of the race, Rome is the principal factor of ancient history, having for its mission to centralize and consolidate all the merely human elements of civilization, power, and grandeur, and thus to subject them to the Divine agency under which, according to the oracle, "one, who should go forth from Judea, was to obtain the empire of the world."

Merivale, on the other hand, seems to have been guided by a happy instinct in the choice of his title ; for he is writing the "History of the Romans," rather than of Rome. He fails to preserve the continuity of his narrative. His episodes are so long as to make us forget the point from which they digressed. While describing provincial affairs, he loses sight of Rome. He presents rival leaders and their factions, not in concurrence and contrast, but in succession. He lacks the skill by which all the chief personages and controlling causes of an historical epoch can be kept simultaneously before the reader's eye, and exhibited in interaction, combination, and conflict. He substitutes a series of monologues for the crowded drama of the forum, senate-house, and camp. But he is eminently successful in the biography of individuals. We feel better acquainted with the genius, political relations, motives, and purpose of the subordinate, yet prominent, actors in the last days of Roman liberty, through the medium of these volumes, than by means of all our previous reading. For example, such characters as those of Clodius and Milo have generally been passed by as not worth a labored analysis.

Yet the former must have been endowed with talents as splendid as his life was vile, and needed only some measure of self-restraint to have retained the permanent control of the republic ; while the latter, shallow alike in intellect and in character, possessed, no doubt, many of the traits of an accomplished demagogue, and was capable at any time of holding much greater men than himself in subserviency to his intrigues. Now these men, and others on the same or a lower plane of influence in the State, are placed by Merivale within the distinct cognizance of his readers, not only in their political agency, but in their manners, habits, social intercourse, and reputation among different classes of people. He is manifestly not a mere scholar, or rather, he is not exclusively a book-man, but a keen observer of men and society around him ; for, while his Romans are neither modernized nor Anglicized, they are actual men, endowed with human passions, affections, and liabilities, and not the impassive abstractions which have so often usurped the Roman name in history.

We may at once illustrate and justify our verdict as to the different merits of these two authors by a characteristic extract from each. From Arnold, we quote a paragraph on the state of literature in the Roman empire under Trajan.

“ We have already expressed our opinion, that the merits of Roman literature, even in its most flourishing period, have been greatly overrated ; and we believe that a review of its condition at the end of the first century of the Christian era, might tend to lessen our wonder at the ignorance which afterwards prevailed throughout Europe. Our first impression would probably be highly favorable : we meet with the names of a great many writers, whose reputation is even now eminent ; we know that learning was not only held in honor in the eastern provinces, where it had been long since cultivated, but that Gaul, and Spain, and Africa abounded with schools and orators, and that a taste for literary studies had been introduced even into Britain. The names of the most distinguished orators at Rome were familiarly known in the remotest parts of the empire, and any splendid passages in their speeches were copied out by the provincial students, and sent down to their friends at home to excite their admiration, and serve as models for their imitation. Even the Roman laws, once so cold and so disdainful of literature and the fine arts, had in some points adopted a more conciliating language ; and the profession of a Sophist was a legal exemption from the duties of

a juryman in the conventus or circuits of the provincial judges. The age of Trajanus then had greatly the advantage over that of Augustus in the more general diffusion of knowledge, while, in the comparison of individual writers, the eminence which Virgil and Horace attained in poetry was at least equalled by the historical fame of Tacitus. But although knowledge was more common than it had been a century before, still its range was necessarily confined ; nor before the invention of printing could it possibly be otherwise. Pliny expresses his surprise at hearing that there was a bookseller's shop to be found at Lugdunum or Lyons ; yet this very city had been for a long time the scene of public recitations in Greek and Latin, in which the orators of Gaul contended for the prize of eloquence. Thus, instead of the various clubs, reading-rooms, circulating libraries, and book-societies, which make so many thousands in our day acquainted with every new publication worthy of notice, it was the practice of authors at Rome to read aloud their compositions to a large audience of their friends and acquaintance ; and not only poetry and orations were thus recited, but also works of history. To attend these readings was often, naturally enough, considered rather an irksome civility ; they who went at first reluctantly were apt to be but languid auditors ; and we all know that even to those most fond of literature, it is no agreeable task to sit hour after hour the unemployed and constrained listeners alike to the eloquence or dulness, to the sense or folly, of another. The weariness then of the audience was to be relieved by the selection of brilliant and forcible passages ; their feelings were to be gratified rather than their understandings ; and amidst the excitement of a crowded hall and an impassioned recitation, there was no room for that silent exercise of judgment and reflection which alone leads to wisdom. From this habit, then, of hearing books rather than reading them, it was natural that poetry and oratory should be the most popular kinds of literature ; and that history, as we have observed in our notice of the Roman historians, should be tempted to assume the charms of oratory, in order to procure for itself an audience. A detail of facts cannot be remembered by being once heard ; and many of the most useful inquiries or discussions in history, however valuable to the thoughtful student, are not the best calculated to win the attention of a mixed audience, when orally delivered. The scarcity of books, therefore, inducing the practice of reading them aloud to many hearers, instead of reserving them for hours of solitude and undisturbed thought, may be considered as one of the chief causes of the false luxuriance of literature at Rome in the reigns of the first emperors, and of its early and complete

decay. We have already noticed the unworthy ideas which the Romans entertained of its nature, and how completely they degraded it into a mere plaything of men's prosperous hours, an elegant amusement, and an embellishment of life, not a matter of serious use to individuals and to the state. Works of physical science, and, much more, such as tend to illustrate the useful arts, were therefore almost unknown; so also were books of travels, details of statistics, and every thing relating to political economy. Had, books of this description been numerous, it would indeed have been strange if the Roman empire had afterwards relapsed into ignorance. The nations by whom it was overrun would readily have appreciated the benefits of a knowledge which daily made life more comfortable, and nations more enlightened and more prosperous; and the advantages of cultivating the understanding would have been as obvious to men of every condition in Rome, as they are actually at the present time in England, Germany, and America. As a proof of this, we may observe, that the only two kinds of really valuable knowledge which the Romans had to communicate to their northern conquerors were both adopted by them with eagerness; we mean their law and their religion. The Roman code found its way, or rather retained much of its authority, in the kingdoms founded upon the ruins of the Roman empire, and its wisdom imperceptibly influenced the law of those countries which affected most to regard it with jealousy and aversion. And the Christian religion, in like manner, survived the confusion of the fourth and fifth centuries, and continually exercised its beneficent power in insuring individual happiness, and lessening the amount of public misery. If, together with these, Rome could have offered to her conquerors an enlarged knowledge of nature and of the useful arts, and clear views of the principles of political economy, and the higher science of legislation in general, we need not doubt that they would have accepted these gifts also, and that thus the corruption to which her law and religion were exposed, would have been in a great measure obviated. For it is a most important truth, and one which requires at this day to be most earnestly enforced, that it is by the study of facts, whether relating to nature or to man, and not by any pretended cultivation of the mind by poetry, oratory, and moral or critical dissertations, that the understandings of mankind in general will be most improved, and their views of things rendered most accurate. And the reason of this is, that every man has a fondness for knowledge of some kind; and by acquainting himself with those facts or truths which are most suited to his taste, he finds himself gaining something, the value of which he can appreciate, and in the pursuit of which, therefore, all his natural faculties will be best developed. From

the mass of varied knowledge thus possessed by the several members of the community, arises the great characteristic of a really enlightened age, a sound and sensible judgment ; a quality which can only be formed by the habit of regarding things in different lights, as they appear to intelligent men of different pursuits and in different classes of society, and by thus correcting the limited notions to which the greatest minds are liable, when left to indulge without a corrective in their own peculiar train of opinions. Want of judgment, therefore, is the prevailing defect in all periods of imperfect civilization, and in those wherein the showy branches of literature have been forced by patronage, while the more beneficial parts of knowledge have been neglected. Nor is it to the purpose to say, that the study of facts is of no benefit, unless we form from them some general conclusions. The disease of the human mind is impatiently to anticipate conclusions, so little danger is there that it will be slow in deducing them when it is once in possession of premises from which they may justly be derived. But, on the other hand, wherever words and striking images are mainly studied, as was the case in ancient Rome, man's natural indolence is encouraged, and he proceeds at once to reason without taking the trouble of providing himself with the necessary materials. Eloquence, indeed, and great natural ability may, in the most favorable instances, disguise to the vulgar the shallowness which lurks beneath them ; but with the mass of mankind this system is altogether fatal. Learning, in the only shape in which it presents itself to their eyes, is to them utterly useless ; they have no desire to pursue it, and if they had such, their pursuit would be fruitless. They remain therefore in their natural ignorance ; not partaking in the pretended cultivation of their age, and feeling no deprivation when the ill-rooted literature, which was the mere amusement of the great and wealthy, is swept away by the first considerable revolution in the state of society." pp. 539 – 542.

As a specimen of Merivale's skill and grace in character-painting, we borrow his portrait of M. Porcius Cato.

"The name of M. Porcius Cato has already been introduced as a leader of the aristocratic party. Younger by a few years than any of his political rivals, he entered upon the stage of public life at a somewhat later period. The absence of Pompeius in Asia first made room for him in the councils of the nobility, whose cause, though himself a plebeian, (one, however, of most ancient and honorable descent,) he embraced with more thorough and exclusive devotion than any of his contemporaries. His character was rigid and untractable, and marked a reaction from that laxity of manners and principles which the circumstances of

the time had rendered general, and which unfortunately seemed indispensable for efficient political action. Well read in books, his mind had no power to assimilate the lessons of history; a systematic follower of the Stoic philosophy, the genuine springs of human action were unknown to or disregarded by him. He idolized the name of his great-grandfather, Cato the Censor; and while he studiously formed himself upon that ancestral model, he had, in fact, already inherited a kindred disposition. But the Censor lived at a time when public opinion still respected the principles at least of old Roman austerity. It was a minority of the extravagant and the speculative, the innovators in practice and theory, against whom he contended; and unsuccessful as he was, he still preserved the reverence of the people, and bequeathed them an honored name for the admiration of posterity. The younger Cato applied the same rules and maxims to his own times, which were rapidly becoming obsolete above a century before. The poet of the civil wars compares Pompeius to the venerable oak, majestic in its decay, and honored for its antique associations; Cæsar to the lightning of Jupiter, which spares nothing venerable, nothing holy, neither the monarch of the forest nor the temples of its own divinity; Cato he might have likened to the rocky promontory which marks the ancient limits of an encroaching ocean, still resisting the action under which the neighboring cliffs have mouldered away, and barely attached to the continent by a narrow and diminishing isthmus. Yet even the iron disposition of the Stoic was not unaffected by the change of circumstances since the period which he most admired. The same temper which made the elder Cato a severe master, a frugal housekeeper, the cultivator of his own acres, the man of maxims and proverbs, converted the younger into a pedantic politician and a scholastic formalist. Private life had become absorbed in the sphere of public occupations; the homely experience of the individual was lost in the recorded wisdom of professional philosophers. The character of the Censor had been simple and true to nature; that of his descendant was a system of elaborate though unconscious affectations. Vol. i. pp. 90, 91.

The two works before us cover in part the same portion of time. The volume of Arnold contains all his historical contributions to the *Encyclopædia Metropolitana*, the contents of which are sufficiently described in the title. Merivale's second volume terminates with the death of Julius Cæsar, — a length of prelude big with magnificent promise for the voluminousness of the entire work.

The leading questions which have presented themselves to

our thought in reading these books, concern the motives and principles of Julius Cæsar. Was he a mere soldier of fortune, or a sincere lover of his country ? Was he the subverter of Roman liberty, or the defender and conservator of whatever of ancient Rome had survived the discord, faction, and corruption of his own and preceding times ? Is he to be condemned as a usurper and a tyrant, or to be revered as a patriot ? It seems to us that historians in general evade these questions, or rather give them a double answer, which is the least probable solution of all ; for a man of his decision, prowess, energy, and cogency cannot have been the mere slave of circumstances, but must have had definite aims, and must have regarded himself as occupying a definite position with reference to the past and the future of his country.

His moral character should first be taken into the account in judging of his purposes. We are strongly inclined to regard him as a man of superior excellence, when tried by the gross and defective standards of his day. He was indeed stained by faults, which would be incompatible with pure patriotism in our own times ; for we dissent from those, who can conceive of personal immorality and public virtue as co-existent in modern Christendom. Whenever, under the light of Christianity, we see a man reckless of pecuniary obligations, false in his domestic relations, the unresisting victim of passion, appetite, or lust, however profound his political wisdom, however splendid his services, we have no faith in his disinterestedness, — we suppose him only judiciously selfish, — we impute to him a higher regard for official honor and gain than for the interests of his country, — we are prepared to see him, even at the last moment, play the demagogue, the turn-coat, or the traitor, if he can thus best subserve his own private ends. But Cæsar can be amenable to no such severe standard. His faults were venial in his position. In his youthful prodigality, and under a vast load of debt, he seems only to have been drawing on future fortunes, for which his reckless expenditures were essential in paving the way. Nor, with the immense revenues of provincial offices, the chances of success in legacy-hunting, and the large emoluments accruing from judicial or political services to individuals, could the creditors of an eloquent and ambitious youth have imagined that they were incurring any risk beyond that of his premature

removal by death. But when Cæsar could command unlimited resources, he was equally free from the charge of ingratitude to his friends and of rapacity towards his enemies. With what were deemed the legitimate spoils of war he gladly rewarded his early adherents and helpers ; while, by protecting the private property even of his well-known enemies, he alienated not a few of his mercenary and unscrupulous partisans.

That Cæsar was addicted to debauchery constitutes the greatest blemish upon his reputation. Yet it must be remembered that, on all subjects connected with the relation of the sexes, the Roman conscience was then utterly torpid ; and the proof is wanting that Cæsar practised greater license than Cato tolerated, or was chargeable with any of those unnatural forms of guilt, which were not only shamelessly enacted by his pleasure-loving coevals, but unblushingly celebrated in poems that will last as long as the Roman name shall endure. In the indulgences of the table he was singularly temperate at an age when gluttony was the fashion of the aristocracy, and drunkenness little less than a duty to society. Cato, who hated him, was wont to say that he alone came sober to the enterprise of destroying the republic.

Nor yet can we impute the immense slaughter of Cæsar's wars to a settled ferocity or cruelty. The barbarians, whom he conquered in fair field, he deemed his lawful prey, and Rome was, in his view, only exercising her indefeasible rights in defending and enlarging her sphere of jurisdiction. He was never gratuitously sanguinary, nor can there be adduced a single instance of vindictiveness towards his personal enemies ; while the progress and termination of the civil war were signalized by numerous acts of forbearance, forgiveness sometimes more than once or twice, and the magnanimous sacrifice of private retaliation for the public good. Most of the conspirators against his life were men whom, for the sake of the state, he had pardoned and raised to honor, while they could not forgive themselves for receiving office and emolument from one whom they regarded as a usurper.

That he was an unbeliever in the popular mythology was creditable to his good sense, and that he openly professed his unbelief only makes us think the better of his honesty. At the same time, there can be little doubt that he felt the reality

of a controlling power and Providence, and was under the dominion of what it is easy for us to brand as paltry superstition, but which, under pagan auspices, only demonstrated the indefeasible supremacy of the religious principle.

In the earlier administration of the province of Transalpine Gaul, we can trace no measures inconsistent with his loyalty to the republic. His aggressive wars were a part of the settled Roman policy ; his conquests belonged to the scheme of progressive enlargement, which had been the prime aim of the commonwealth from the days of Romulus downward. The privileges which he ceded to allies, and his constant advocacy of the rights and immunities of the Italian cities, were the surest mode of perpetuating their allegiance, and securing their tranquillity in peace and their vigorous coöperation in war. In refusing to yield up his command at the bidding of the hostile oligarchy, he indeed virtually raised the standard of rebellion. But in this, he might have confidently appealed from the temporarily dominant faction to the collective interests of the empire. Had he obeyed, he must not only have submitted to disgrace, banishment, and confiscation, but he must have left his veterans unrewarded, yielded up his province to dismemberment, and abandoned his conquests to the chances of a weak administration, newly levied armies, and inexperienced commanders. He still governed in the name of the Roman people, and maintained the posture of one amenable to rightly constituted authorities and an impartial tribunal.

In the civil war, we cannot but regard him as the veritable representative and champion of the Roman people against a narrow, proscriptive, sanguinary aristocracy. Had Pompey been the victor, the senate would have been more than decimated by the executioner, and half the estates in Rome would have passed under the spear, or into the hands of the victorious faction ; nor would republican forms have retained even the nominal reverence which Cæsar never denied them. The heart of the nation was with Cæsar in the conflict. His was the party of individual security, social order, and public justice. Pompey tolerated no neutrality, and the eager flocking of his partisans to his camp indicates the only terms of safety and amnesty which he was prepared to yield. The quietness with which the unarmed of both and all parties awaited

Cæsar's successive stages of conquest, and his approach to Rome, indicates universal confidence in his integrity and his clemency.

But, in assuming the place of an autocrat, though under republican names and with the show of popular election, he laid violent hands on the Roman constitution, annihilated the commonwealth, and became the first emperor without the title. The question then recurs, Had not republican Rome ceased to exist prior to his usurpation? To this there can be but one answer. Election by the people had become a farce and a fiction. There had never been devised any system, by which, after the city became populous, the suffrages of the citizens could be fairly collected. The centuries had grown more and more unequal in their numbers, and even the summoning of the poorest and fullest centuries, for the nominal exercise of their rights, was a rare event. The system, honestly carried out, may be understood by supposing the elections in Boston determined by the majority of streets, and the vote of the several streets taken in the order of the fewness and opulence of their inhabitants, — Beacon or Summer Street being called first, Broad or Belknap Street among the last. To make the parallel complete, we must suppose the citizens on the richer streets, so closely united, both by common interests and by hereditary contempt and hatred for the dwellers in plebeian quarters, as always to present a united front against the men or measures peculiarly favored by the many. In this case, the election would so generally be determined by the majority of the streets comprising a minority of the people, that it would be deemed a useless impertinence to call the poorer citizens off from their work, and to block up the passages to the hall of assembly, for the observance of an unmeaning formalism. But even this statement by no means fully represents the condition of things at the period of which we are writing. Cæsar had probably never known of an election effected, or a law enacted, except by means of bribery or violence. In fact, the consuls of the year were the men who, during the preceding year, had bought off, overbidden, falsely impeached, or covertly assassinated their nearest competitors. The centuries were packed for each election. The mercenary interposition of tribunes, or the unlimited authority of irresponsible augurs, could always be depended upon to dis-

solve or prorogue the *comitia*, if by any chance the aspects were unfavorable to the preconcerted movements of those who ruled the hour. Every powerful man in the state had a sufficiently numerous body of retainers, whether freedmen or clients, to impede the access to the polls of voters who might turn the fortune of the day. The consequence was, that the constitutional had become no less impotent than the actual majority of the citizens ; and the supreme power of the republic was at the mercy of rival or successive cabals, all equally selfish, exacting, capricious, unprincipled, and incalculable.

Meanwhile, the judiciary power had become a mere nullity. Each verdict was determined by the superior audacity or the more profuse bribery of the magistrates, or of accuser or defendant, claimant or respondent. Sometimes armed men overawed the tribunal. Sometimes hired bullies and ruffians frightened the judges into submission. Still oftener, they took their seats with the sentence agreed upon and paid for ; and not unfrequently the party, who thought his cause as sure as money could make it, found too late, to his double cost, that his opponent had outbribed him, and secured the very judge whose solemn pledge he had been purchasing at a ruinous sacrifice.

Now it requires no very strong effort of the imagination to suppose that Cæsar may have regarded this abounding profligacy, this virtual anarchy, as a justifying and worthy cause for armed interference, — that he deemed it the part of true patriotism to force back the reign of justice, equity, and order. Nothing sacred remained to be destroyed, — nothing, that in better days had been held inviolable, remained unviolated. He had been from youth the champion of popular rights, and had manifested no sympathy with any of the successive factions of merely senatorial or patrician partialities. On the other hand, he had never ceased to be the object of jealousy and aversion to those who identified the state with their own aristocratical clique. And when he entered upon his successive dictatorships, or suffered himself to assume the consular office for an extra-legal term, he can have had no room for doubt that the untrammelled suffrages of the Roman people would have placed him where he stood.

An alternative course, no doubt, suggested itself to Cæsar. He might have lent his force as a military commander, and

his influence as a citizen, to the reëstablishment of the ancient order of the republic. But in so doing, he would have rendered a great disservice to his country. The Roman constitution was adapted only to the government of a city of limited extent and few dependencies. Its inadequacy began to be felt so soon as intercourse, whether peaceful or hostile, was extended beyond the Italian peninsula. Nay, there were, not infrequently, domestic emergencies utterly beyond its control. The office of dictator was in no sense constitutional, but a time-honored mode of suspending all rights, obligations, and functions under the constitution,—a suit of storm-sails for the ship of state, to be used when the fair-weather canvas was close-reefed. As the empire grew by affiliation and conquest, unity, despatch, and continuity of administrative policy became more and more essential ; and for lack of these elements, almost every inch of subject territory had to be conquered more than once, and the sovereign city itself was repeatedly on the brink of ruin. But unity there could not be, when the consuls were chosen with no reference to their common opinions or mutual adaptations, but, on the other hand, one was often thrown into the chair to secure the election of the other, or was placed there solely to neutralize his colleague. Despatch was also impossible ; for that can be the result only of use and experience, and the consuls came generally to their office as absolute novices in the management of all civil functions, beyond the precincts of their own city, and yielded place to their successors before they had become conversant with the routine of official duty. Continuous, nay, even definite, policy was out of the question, for similar reasons ; for the term of a single year was too brief for the development of any principles of government, or the establishment of any settled plan of administration. Meanwhile, the people had lost whatever national traits might once have fitted them for self-government. There was no estate on which reliance could be placed for integrity or patriotism. The senate was, in part, a haughty, luxurious, and effeminate oligarchy,—in part, a band of needy and profligate demagogues. The equites were proverbially mercenary, and every man among them was constantly on sale to the highest bidder. Of the plebeians, the richer emulated all patrician forms of vice, while the poorer were public paupers, depend-

ent on the public granaries and on the largesses of office-holders. At the same time, the empire, by its vast extent and its heterogeneous elements, had outgrown the possibilities of a purely republican administration. A vigorous central government, under the continuous control of a single mind, was the desideratum of the age, and alone could have preserved the integrity of the empire. Nor can we deem it inconsistent with the purest and most enlightened patriotism, that Cæsar should first have levied war against a faction avowedly hostile to all that he identified with the true interests of Rome, and then should have accepted whatever official trusts an admiring senate and a grateful people saw fit to devolve upon him. Nay, did not the very acts of senate and people, the almost unanimous acclamation of the citizens, the seeming acquiescence of his old political enemies, virtually modify the constitution to suit the exigencies of the times? For it must be remembered, that the Roman constitution was not a written document, with prescribed modes of amendment, but that it was, at every successive epoch, what the will of the senate and the people made it, the creature of their votes; and from the expulsion of Tarquin downwards, modified only by civil violence or by the simple immediate mandate of the legitimate assemblies.

Cæsar's use of the supreme power strongly confirms our view of his character. The conspirators against him deprived posterity of the opportunity of knowing whether he would have accepted the insignia of royalty, and whether he meditated the transmission of his honors to his nephew and heir. His consenting to wear the laurel crown should be regarded as a non-significant fact; for the laurel was at once the meed of his foreign victories, and a welcome covering for the baldness of which it was his infirmity to feel ashamed. Certain is it, that he solicited only republican names for his public functions, and that more pompous titles and environments might have been his for the asking, and were informally urged upon his acceptance. But that what we should now denominate a limited monarchy was his ideal of the government which he deemed best for Rome, and of which he determined to be the lifelong head, if not the founder of a dynasty, we cannot doubt. We accord, in the main, with the views expressed by Merivale, in the following passage.

“ We have now followed the career of Julius Cæsar to the point at which his supremacy is finally established, and the proud defiance of a licentious oligarchy has subsided into the murmur of a broken and proscribed faction. We have seen him commence his political existence with the assertion of the popular claims identified with the hero of his own house. He urged them with a fearless vehemence, in which it is impossible to mistake the sincerity of his devotion. The first steps of every popular champion are bold and decided. At the outset he has a distinct object before him ; he knows what his grievances are, if not their true remedies. He may delude himself, as he proceeds, with the fancy that he is reconstructing, but there is no deception about the fact that he is pulling down. His days and years are marked by the successive demolition of real and substantial things, while his new creations are, perhaps, no more than ideas. Such, however, was not the case with Cæsar. From the time, indeed, of his first entry into public life, his name had been signalized by the overthrow, one by one, of the strong-holds of ancient privilege, and in the ardor of the attack, straitened in his means and controlled in his natural impulses, he had little opportunity of applying himself to the task of renovation. Accordingly, when the ruins of the past began to be cleared away, he was astonished to behold how great was the gap he had made. The solemn question now urged itself upon him, how this desolate space was to be again filled up ; and in the boldness and originality of his views, it found an appropriate solution. But the work to be performed was long, and the time granted to him was but short ; we shall see him, however, erect more than one durable edifice of utility and justice, and bear witness to his planning of others on a scale still more magnificent, while many vast conceptions were obviously floating in his mind, of which he was not even permitted to shadow forth the outline. His undisputed tenure of power lasted hardly more than one year and a half, including an interval of ten months’ absence from the city. It was, therefore, impossible that his ideas, however long he may have actually brooded over them, could receive their complete and methodical realization. We are the less able to appreciate, with accuracy, the clearness of Cæsar’s views, and the process of their development, from the fact of there existing no record of the order in which his enactments succeeded one another. We know not at what stage his legislation was interrupted by his departure for Spain, nor have we the means of judging whether his reforms gained in boldness or lost in impartial justice, when his power seemed secured by his final victory. It would have been deeply interesting to have remarked how one idea may have germinated in many new directions ; how various imperfect measures may have conduced to one harmonious result.

But the measures themselves, confused and disjointed as is the form in which they present themselves to us, point decisively to the existence, in their author's mind, of a comprehensive plan for the entire reconstruction of the national polity. The general principle which pervades them is the elevation of a middle class of citizens, to constitute the ultimate source of all political authority. The ostensible ruler of the state is to be in fact the creation of this body, its favorite, its patron, its legislator, and its captain. To this body he is to owe his political existence. He is to watch over the maintenance of an equilibrium of popular forces, checking with the same firm hand the discontent of the depressed nobility, and the encroachments of the aspiring rabble. The eternal principles of rule and order he is to assert as sacred and immutable ; but he is to be himself responsible for their application at his own discretion to the varying wants of society. This idea of government was perfectly new to the ancient world. It was the first rude conception of popular monarchy, the phantom of philosophers and jurists, which has been so often shadowed forth in theory, but never permanently realized in practice. The event indeed proved that an attempt to combine the discordant elements of despotism and freedom could avail only as a temporary expedient, under favor of a strong popular reaction from a period of anarchy and suffering. It was repeated, as we shall see, under these conditions, with limited and transient success, by Augustus and Nerva. But its effect was either to exchange the sword of the open foe for the dagger of the assassin, or to crush all independence of thought and speech, and congeal in stagnant inaction the life-blood of the nation. If, however, it contained, in execution, the seeds of premature degeneracy and corruption, the humane experiment at least deserved, and did not fail to obtain, the sympathy of mankind.

"The pomp of four triumphs, the spectacles of the theatre and the circus, the unwonted splendor of the decorations lavished on the dictator's person, were merely frivolous expedients for amusing the people, and enhancing the popularity and dignity of their favorite. To consolidate the power he had acquired on the firm basis of the national affections was a much more arduous undertaking. The demands of the age, as they presented themselves to Cæsar's mind, may be summed up in the language of the discourse attributed, though with little authority, to the historian Sallust, but in which some later rhetorician appears at least to have embodied the sentiments ascribed to antiquity by his own contemporaries. A noble object of ambition, it was said, lay open to the emperor who should aspire to rule over the Roman people. He found them bloated and corrupted by the excess of luxury, overwhelmed with debt and degraded by the vices which

debt engenders. The nobles were selfish and cruel, and had sought in a civil war the surest refuge from their creditors, and the only means of retrieving their fortunes. But this faction had now been crushed; let the seeds of such passions be prevented from taking root again. Let luxury be repressed by sumptuary laws; let the numbers of the privileged orders be increased; let the rights of citizenship be extended; let colonies be planted in the provinces; let military service be required equally of all, and none be retained under their standards beyond a reasonable period. Let the magistrates and judges be chosen for their virtues and dignity, and not merely for their wealth. It would be vain to entrust the working of such reforms as these to a commonwealth of free and equal citizens; but the impartial eye of a supreme ruler may watch securely over their execution, and neither fear, nor favor, nor private interests interfere to clog their operation." Vol. II. pp. 401–406.

Such seem to have been the noble purposes with which Cæsar entered upon the virtual sovereignty of Rome; and, had they not been maturely formed and resolutely held in view, his brief rule could not have been so prolific as it was of wise, just, reformatory, and beneficent measures. Never, in any other instance, were the abuses and excesses consequent upon a civil war so diligently contended against and so effectually suppressed. The relation of debtor and creditor was placed upon a much more secure basis of equity than it had occupied for a score or two of the previous years. The disarmed soldiery were not only settled upon the public domains, but so widely scattered through Italy and the provinces as to preclude the combined action of any considerable number of them, whether for predatory or seditious purposes. The sickly and exhausted body politic was recruited by the ceding of the full rights of citizenship not only to the Italian cities, but to certain classes of the provincial subjects. While Cæsar thus sought to extend the franchise, which had been previously guarded with a narrow, paltry exclusiveness, he devised various measures for checking the dangerous increase of slaves, for encouraging emancipation and stimulating free labor. Of his sumptuary laws we can only say, that they were authorized by the best political philosophy of that age, and that their design was eminently worthy a paternal administration. While these enactments were adopted to counteract the most nearly imminent evils and perils, Cæsar

extended his views into the future, and projected a code of laws, under which all local immunities and burdens were to be merged in the impartial administration of justice throughout the empire. With similar purpose he instituted the thorough survey of every province, with reference to the formation of a complete map of the Roman world. His reform of the deranged and confused calendar, important in a scientific aspect, was hardly less so in its political bearings ; as the indefinite Roman year had, like all things else, become venal, and subject to be lengthened or shortened by the application of bribery to the pontifical college. To him also belongs the honor of a pioneer in the diffusion of knowledge among the people, in the institution of the earliest free public library of which history bears the record. In fine, there was no department of the public service which escaped his providence, — no vital interest of the people which was not cherished under his guardianship.

His true magnanimity appears the more conspicuous, when we compare him with the most illustrious of his coevals. Cato was undoubtedly a severer moralist and a man of more rigid virtue ; but he belonged to the past rather than to the present, and was too obstinate and impracticable to exert any appreciable influence on society or the state. The shadow of self lay constantly on Cicero's path, and his magnificent genius had its offset in an equally magnificent egotism. Even in his greatest achievements and most generous acts, he never loses sight of the necessity of defining his own vague and multiform position, while the self-consciousness of a *novus homo* made him equally jealous of the ancestral nobility, and ashamed to appear as the open advocate of the rights of the people. As for Cæsar's assassins, their dissimulation and treachery, their supple sycophancy, their ready reception of honor and emolument from the conqueror, and their ill-disguised mortification that his sense of their merits was not fully commensurate with their own, deprive them of such modicum of honor as may attach itself to the simple act of tyrannicide, and reconcile us to the retributive fortune which expiated blood by blood.

Lastly, when we compare Cæsar with his great rival, we are most of all made aware of his incontestable superiority. As a general, Pompey was unsurpassed in vigor, courage,

and efficiency on the field of battle ; Cæsar, in the command of resources, the arrangement of campaigns, and the whole conduct of war. As a statesman, Pompey had the narrowness of a Roman aristocrat ; Cæsar, the large heart and generous aim of a citizen of the world. Pompey would have sacrificed half the empire for his friends, and the other half in vengeance upon his enemies. Cæsar's friends were all who were not his enemies in arms ; his only enemies were those of the people and the state. Pompey would have seemed less great, had he lived to enter Rome with laurels from Pharsalia ; Cæsar's brief political career eclipses his renown in arms.

We trust that we shall not incur the charge of anti-republican tendencies in our vindication of Cæsar's fame. On the contrary it has been our incidental aim to indicate the only principles on which free institutions can be maintained. If officers become venal ; if elections are given over to irresponsible wire-pullers ; if the ermine of justice is thrown into the scramble of the caucus and the ballot-box ; if ignorance is fostered or tolerated ; if social distinctions are aggravated ; if, under the specious names of free trade and reciprocity, American labor is forced into beggarly competition with pauper labor abroad ; if the nation is broken up into a multitude of selfish and short-sighted factions ; if man-worship stands in the stead of right and principle, — our confederation must follow in the wake of the ancient republics. A nation must either be fit to govern itself, or must have a master. When a hydra-headed despotism or a single tyrant presents itself as the only alternative in the darker horoscope which abounding discord, corruption, and profligacy sometimes constrain us to draw for our country, we cannot but choose the former, and could only beg of an outraged Heaven to send her no less beneficent a tyrant than Julius Cæsar.